



Class of 2011 Heads Back To Campus Wielding More Connections, Concern and Consumer Clout Than Any Class Before Them

-Latest Alloy College Explorer from Alloy Media + Marketing Offers Revealing Look at Changing College Life

(New York, NY) – August 15, 2007 - The curriculum may not have changed radically since their older siblings graduated, but for the current crop of matriculating college students heading back to school this Fall, campus life has taken on a significantly new face. In findings released today, Alloy Media + Marketing's (Nasdaq: ALOY) 7th annual Alloy College Explorer, powered by Harris Interactive®, illuminates the contrast of today's collegiate perspective from that of four years ago.

The largest college class in history (students ages 18-30) has evolved in three key areas: communication modality, purchase behavior, and concern over world issues. First and most operative distinction, technology has taken students out of the dorm room and morphed communication into mobile rapid fire exchanges fraught with 'pokes' and alerts. Four short years ago, being "wired" referred to an over-caffeinated all-nighter, and friends met up on the quad without the option of today's "online" student union. "Friending" your professor may not seem the proper student-teacher etiquette to the old brigade but for today's class, it's the most efficient way to get the grade.

"The distinct comparisons we've seen from the 2003 study will have considerable impact on how groups eager to attract the attention of this ever- growing and powerful consumer group should be reaching them, stated Dana Markow, VP Research, Harris Interactive. "Perpetual advancements in technology have had notable impact on students' daily conduct and as we head into an election year, we're seeing a class that's assuming more control over their future."

We're Faster Than You

New digital offerings have revolutionized the way students are communicating and navigating campus life. Today's quad is a flurry of mobile activity, and you'd be hard pressed to find a student without at least one mobile gadget on hand allowing for 24/7 communication and entertainment.

Now-a-days, cell phone ownership seems to be a requisite for college students, with close to all students (93%) reporting they own one. In just four years, ownership has seen an almost 15 point increase. Today, with the use of blogs and social networking sites serving as the modern forum for a young persons' daily documentation - it's no surprise that digital camera ownership has just about doubled since 2003. Today, 64% of students report owning one and 16% cite intention to purchase this year.



While in 2003, a mere 17% of students owned MP3 players, and the iPod was not yet a staple, today, students roam the quad to the beat of myriad audio experiences—with more than half (58%) owning one.

Allowing for much of this perpetual connectedness, is a campus gone wired. Just four years ago, “wireless” was not part of the campus vernacular, with only 14% of campuses reporting full capability. Today, that figure has doubled. Just about one-third (28.9%) of campuses now offer blanket coverage and almost two-thirds claim to have a wireless strategy plan in place¹. Demand for mobility is also expressed via the annual decline of desktop ownership in favor of laptops. With a 21 point increase of laptop ownership in the last two years alone (63% today vs. 42% in 2005), the dorm desktop appears as “old-school” as the word processor did in the ‘90’s.

We’re Bigger Than You

A notable change since 2003 is the number of students matriculating. With more students (ages 18-30) attending college than ever before, this year’s class marks the largest in U.S history, with a 14% increase as 13.3 million students head back to campus. And, they’re toting back a hefty - and record - \$198 Billion in consumer spending power². That’s an impressive 31% increase since ‘03. In just four years, this group’s annual discretionary spending has seen a significant increase, with current figures rising to \$48 billion – up a whopping \$15 Billion!

These students are also earning their keep. Three-quarters of students now report employment during the year.

Girl power persists apace, as female continue to dominate campus in head count. This year, the female college population gets a 56% slice of the pie, about 1.1 million more than reported in ‘03.

“This year’s study illustrates that college is clearly in vogue, and that mobility and media convergence are key to collegiate lifestyle,” stated Samantha Skey, EVP Strategic Marketing, Alloy Media + Marketing.

“The College Explorer has been an essential tool for marketers to understand campus mindset, and although some elements—communal bathrooms, for example—are endemic to collegiate life, others, such as communication and cognition, are evolving rapidly.”

¹ The Campus Computing Project, The 2005 National Survey of Information Technology in US Higher Education

² Calculation based on survey findings among 18-30 year old students projected to the universe of 13.3 million 18-30 year old college students as determined by the National Center for Education Statistics (2006)



We've Got More Clout

Not only is their discretionary spending year to year on the rise, college student's influence over purchases and influence over their peers continues to grow. Recommendation from peers has always held import with this group, but widespread web communication has propelled the impact of student influence over popular consumption.

For the modern student, a small circle of campus friends is only one of many slices of the "friend" universe. Today, social communication via the web has redefined "friendship", creating an environment and culture where there seems to be no limit to the number of pals one might acquire. In fact, online communication is gaining as 27% of co-eds cite choosing to stay in touch with friends via social networking site over face-to-face communication, at 11%, or over phone, with 23% reporting. Whereas social networks were virtually an unknown entity for the class of '03, today, more than half (54%) of college students (ages 18-30) visit one in a typical day.

Whether it's the new Andy Samberg movie, the most wanted Wii game, or the latest limited edition sneakers, you can be sure that young people today will have an opinion they intend to share with their large network of "friends". In fact, two-thirds (66%) of students are learning about brands, products and services from their friends and when it comes to the type of advertising that most influences their purchasing decisions, word of mouth has soared with 61% reporting its power. In 2004, just 48% stated they pay a lot of attention to word of mouth advertising. Specifically, movie and electronics purchases show the heaviest peer-to-peer influence. Students cite they are most likely to look to friends for advice across these categories at 60% and 48%, respectively.

And when it comes to making decisions on technology purchases, no one knows better than a tech-savvy student. More than half of students claim they played the deciding role in recent decision to buy a computer (57%), a digital camera (57%), or a cell phone/PDA (66%).

Skey commented, "Peer power persists as a key indicator of college behavior. Collegiate consumers place high priority on social bonds, showing a 54% jump since last year in reported average number of friends online, and the latest findings concur - they're actively participating in information sharing.

"Capturing the attention of the right students will offer a marketer not only the opportunity to attract that consumer's loyalty, but the following of a larger group - their influential network of "friends."



We're Louder Than you

Just four years ago, the average student wanting “BMOC” fame could look no further than the campus environs. For today’s student, it’s a whole new world where everyone has the opportunity to be seen and to be heard by an online audience of millions, and becoming the next internet star may be a reality. Interestingly, just over one-quarter of students (25%) actually claim they have “never” visited a user-generated site.

With social networks and user generated sites replacing the old “soapbox”, it seems modern day students are finding the power of their own voice. Students appear dissatisfied with the current state of the union and are placing more responsibility on behaviors that can impact our world. This years study finds 35% of students reporting they feel that people their age have the greatest ability to impact positive world change and up from last year, 37% cite they are more likely to purchase brands that are socially and environmentally responsible (33% in 2006).

“This group of college students appears not only to be more aware of issues, but to be more concerned and more likely to take action to impact change. They have greater tools and technology to be heard and to be informed than their predecessors and they look to corporations to serve the greater good.

“By fully understanding the nuances and shifts in student behaviors and by appealing to the needs and desires of this increasingly wealthy and powerful group, marketers can gain substantial and quantifiable opportunity to become a positive and integral part of modern life on the quad”, concludes Skey.

Methodology

This survey was conducted online within the United States by Harris Interactive on behalf of Alloy Media + Marketing between April 11 and April 30, 2007 among 1,592 adults (college students (full-time, part-time, 4-yr., 2-yr., ages 18 to 30)). Figures for age, sex, race/ethnicity, region and school status (full-time, part-time, 4-yr., 2-yr.) were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents’ propensity to be online.

With a pure probability sample of 1,592, one could say with a ninety-five percent probability that the overall results would have a sampling error of +/- 3 percentage points. Sampling error for data based on sub-samples would be higher and would vary. However, that does not take other sources of error into account. This online survey is not based on a probability sample and therefore no theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

About Alloy Media + Marketing



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About Harris Interactive

Harris Interactive is the 13th largest and fastest-growing market research firm in the world. The company provides innovative research, insights and strategic advice to help its clients make more confident decisions which lead to measurable and enduring improvements in performance. Harris Interactive is widely known for *The Harris Poll*, one of the longest running, independent opinion polls and for pioneering online market research methods. The company has built what it believes to be the world's largest panel of survey respondents, the Harris Poll Online. Harris Interactive serves clients worldwide through its United States, Europe and Asia offices, its wholly-owned subsidiaries Novatris in France and MediaTransfer AG in Germany, and through a global network of independent market research firms. More information about Harris Interactive may be obtained at www.harrisinteractive.com. To become a member of the Harris Poll Online and be invited to participate in online surveys, register at www.harrispollonline.com.

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